

Transforming the National Park System

“Present-day management of nature in the parks differs substantially from that in the early decades of national park history—the most fundamental difference being the degree to which science now informs the Service’s natural resource practices.”

—Richard West Sellars
Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History

Since its inception in 1999, the Natural Resource Challenge has garnered an approximate increase of \$76 million in base funding for natural resource management and research in the national parks. The Challenge is greatly helping to transform the Service into a modern and more effective bureau for the preservation of park natural resources. As reported in this chapter and throughout this publication, the Challenge has enabled NPS participation in Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units and the establishment of monitoring networks, research learning centers, Exotic Plant Management Teams, and other important institutions. Together they are building knowledge of the parks, increasing the effectiveness of resource management strategies, engaging accomplished scientists in park research, and capturing the interest of the public in the requirements for long-term preservation of our national treasures. The articles reflect this exciting evolution and document positive trends in the care of the parks for the future.



National Park Service Director Fran Mainella cuts the symbolic “last” melaleuca tree in Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida, as forestry technician Billy Snyder looks on at a ceremony held February 4, 2003. Over a period of nearly 20 years the National Park Service and its partners battled the invasive plant species, treating approximately 14 million trees and bringing the species to a level that can now be maintained.